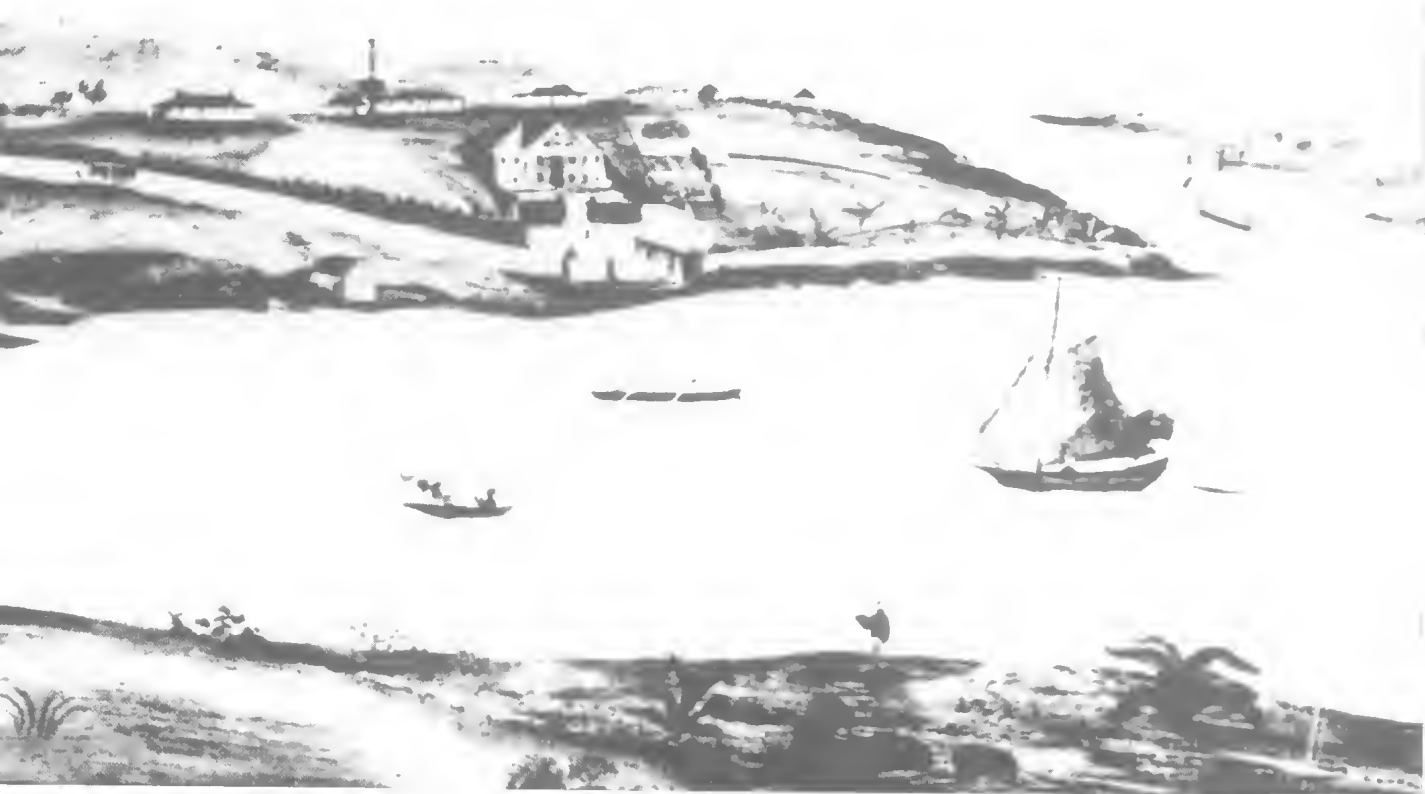


1

THE STAGE IS SET

Queensland
in the 1860s





The colony of Queensland was created on 6 June 1859. On that day it was separated from New South Wales by Letters Patent under the Seal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and over the signature of Queen Victoria¹. Sir George Ferguson Bowen KCMG was duly appointed governor. On arrival in its capital, Brisbane, some five months later, on 10 December 1859, he proclaimed the colony and set about the appointment of the first parliament.

For 18 years this frontier of Queen Victoria's empire, that was to become Queensland, had been growing. The operation of the Moreton Bay penal settlement was being wound up from 1839², and in 1842 Captain Wickham RN had become police magistrate of the newly proclaimed free town of Brisbane. Settlers, previously excluded from the area within a 50 mile radius, could now use Brisbane's port facilities, and many moved north from New South Wales to join the first pioneers in taking up the rich agricultural and grazing lands that were known to exist on the Darling Downs and to the north. Between 1842 and 1862 there were also many settlers who came direct from Europe to this northern district of the colony of New South Wales—Moreton Bay. The new settlement was fortunate in the quality of its immigrants for many were men of ability,



Previous page: Brisbane 1830. The Windmill, later to become the first home for the museum, is on the skyline. To its right is the Convict Barracks building that was to be the museum's second home (painting, by Cedric Flower after a contemporary sketch in the Mitchell Library, in the Civic Art collection. Reproduced by courtesy of the Brisbane City Council).

energy and some means. Some of the outstanding leaders in the community had arrived in one or another of the three ships chartered by Dr John Dunmore Lang, who had returned to Europe in 1840 with a vision of a new England in the South Seas. He set out to induce 'skilled and scholarly men of sound moral and religious principles'³ to migrate to what he referred to as 'Cookland'—Moreton Bay. Not content with mere representation in the parliament in Sydney, these men worked successfully for separation and the constitutional autonomy of an independent colony. Primarily they were motivated to achieve the just and democratic regulation of property.

Like other parts of Australia, Queensland was dominated by its urban communities. It was a product of the industrial revolution^{4,5}. Instead of taking up land for farming and grazing, many newcomers had settled in the towns, becoming merchants and traders, manning the ports, and starting industries to serve the growing urban and rural communities. Even the pastoral and agricultural ventures were run as businesses rather than the feudal peasant farms from which European communities had developed.

At the time of separation from New South Wales there were about 28,000 Queenslanders of European origin. About half lived in the country,



Sir George Ferguson Bowen KCMG, captain general and first governor of the colony of Queensland.

St. Patrick's Tavern, east side of Queen Street, Brisbane, between Edward and Albert Streets, about 1860 (photograph by courtesy Monier Roof Tiles).



The Reverend John Dunmore Lang who persuaded many of the 'skilled and scholarly men', who subsequently became leaders of the Brisbane community, to migrate to Cooksland—Moreton Bay—before its separation from New South Wales.



The Hon. R.G.W. Herbert, first colonial secretary and premier of Queensland.

scattered over an area that extended north to Rockhampton and inland about 250 miles. The other half were equally divided between Brisbane-Ipswich and the smaller provincial towns⁶.

Work was plentiful everywhere and property ownership was high. Graziers, in particular, were desperately short of labour but there was also a sound level of employment in the cities. Schemes that were suggested to supply a cheap work force included reintroduction of convict transportation or importation of labourers from India or China. These ideas were not developed. Efforts were made, however, to attract migrants from Great Britain. On 9 October 1860, on the recommendation of a Select Committee on Immigration, a certain Henry Jordan was appointed as Queensland's representative in London to encourage immigration. The enticements offered were grants of land under a land order system, and an assisted passage scheme. It was a very active public relations programme that Jordan pursued. In his final report he stated that between January 1861 and December 1866 he had delivered 192 lectures to a total audience of 161,200 people and had despatched 85 ships carrying 35,725 persons⁷—more than 20% of the number he had addressed.

The Queensland government also sent a representative—John Heussler—to Europe to recruit migrants under the land order system. Dr Lang, the influential supporter of immigration, strongly supported the idea of having some from Germany. Heussler himself had come from Germany, so it was not surprising that most of the migrants he recruited came from that country—where political unrest made his job easier⁸. Many of the Germans who came to Queensland had a farming background, and rather than remain in the towns as many of Jordan's settlers did, they chose to settle in rural areas⁹.

Governor Bowen reported on the Queensland of 1860 in glowing terms—thereby increasing the influx of immigrants: public revenue was nearly three times the average of that for Great Britain; housing was generally of a good standard¹⁰. Again quoting Bowen—after his trip to the Darling Downs in 1860:

I have also found in the houses of the long chain of settlers who have entertained me with such cordial hospitality, all the comforts and most of the luxuries and refinements of the houses of country gentlemen in England¹¹.

It was an exciting time as this great flood of migrants poured into Queensland. Most came to make their fortunes and many believed that this could be done through the acquisition of land.

However, there were few people with experience of either government or politics. To make up for the lack of a legislature, Queenslanders had adopted, enthusiastically, the use of public meetings to resolve political differences¹². Brisbane had elected its first municipal council only two months before the governor's arrival¹³, so experience, even at a local government level, was lacking.

When Bowen arrived in Brisbane and proclaimed separation from New South Wales, a public service had to be created and legislation enacted. As an interim measure, the first Executive Council and legislature were not elected but were appointed by the governor. As premier, Bowen appointed 29 year-old R.G.M. Herbert who had accompanied him to Queensland. Despite his youth and lack of local experience, Herbert was well qualified for the job, for he previously had been Gladstone's private secretary and had a knowledge of government that was rare in the colony¹². The first elections for the Legislative



QUEENSLAND
Government Gazette.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

No. 1.] SATURDAY, 10 DECEMBER, 1859.

PROCLAMATION.

By His Excellency SIR GEORGE FERGUSON BOWEN, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS by an Act passed in the Session of Parliament holden in the eighteenth and nineteenth years of the Reign of Her Majesty, entitled, "*An Act to enable Her Majesty to assent to a Bill as amended of the Legislature of New South Wales to confer a Constitution on New South Wales, and to grant a Civil List to Her Majesty*," it was amongst other things enacted that it should be lawful for Her Majesty, by Letters Patent, to be from time to time issued under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, to erect into a separate Colony or Colonies, any territories which might be separated from New South Wales by such alteration as therein was mentioned, of the northern boundary thereof; and in and by such Letters Patent, or by Order in Council, to make provision for the Government of any such Colony, and for the establishment of a Legislature therein, in manner as nearly resembling the form of Government and Legislature which should be at such time established in New South Wales as the circumstances of such Colony will allow; and that full power should be given in and by such Letters Patent, or Order in Council, to the Legislature of the said Colony, to make further provision in that behalf. And whereas Her Majesty, in exercise of the powers so vested in Her Majesty, has by Her Commission under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom, bearing date the sixth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine, appointed that from and after the publication of the said Letters Patent in the Colonies of New South Wales and Queensland, the Territory described in the said Letters Patent should be separated from the said Colony of New South Wales and be erected into the separate Colony of Queensland: Now, therefore, I SIR GEORGE FERGUSON BOWEN, the Governor of Queensland, in pursuance of the authority invested in me by Her Majesty, do hereby proclaim and publish the said Letters Patent in the words and figures following, respectively.

QUEENSLAND.

LETTERS PATENT erecting Moreton Bay into a Colony, under the name of QUEENSLAND, and appointing SIR GEORGE FERGUSON BOWEN, K.C.M.G., to be Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the same.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, to Our trusty and well-beloved SIR GEORGE FERGUSON BOWEN, Knight Commander of Our most distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George.

GREETING:

WHEREAS, by a reserved Bill of the Legislature of New South Wales, passed in the seventeenth year of our reign, as amended by an Act passed in the Session of Parliament holden in the eighteenth and nineteenth years of our reign, entitled, "*An Act to enable Her Majesty to assent to a Bill, as amended, of the Legislature of New South*

Wales, to confer a Constitution on New South Wales, and to grant a Civil List to Her Majesty." it was enacted that nothing therein contained should be deemed to prevent us from altering the boundary of the Colony of New South Wales on the north, in such a manner as to us might seem fit; and it was further enacted by the said last recited Act, that if We should at any time exercise the power given to Us by the said reserved Bill of altering the northern boundary of our said colony, it should be lawful for Us by any Letters Patent, to be from time to time issued under the Great Seal of our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, to erect into a separate Colony or Colonies any territories which might be separated from our said colony of New South Wales by such alterations as aforesaid of the northern boundary thereof, and in and by such Letters Patent, or by Order in Council, to make provision for the Government of any such separate colony, and for the establishment of a Legislature therein, in manner as nearly resembling the form

Proclamation of the colony of Queensland.

Assembly were held on 27 April 1860¹⁴. The right to vote was limited to males and was based on the ownership of property. The success of Queensland's early settlers in acquiring property is evident in the fact that the percentage who voted was almost as great as that in New South Wales, where property ownership was not a prerequisite.

The traditional view of Queensland political life at the time of separation has been one of conflict between conservative squatters in the country and town liberals. However, since 'all classes were aiming at the acquisition of property and the removal of all obstacles thereto'¹², the real political activity was that of 'faction among different types of property owners, rather than of growing party schism on a basis of principle'¹². Because the worker still hoped to become a property owner there was no strong Labour movement in local political life—though the beginnings of this show in the arrival of the eight hour day movement in Brisbane in March 1861.

In the first session of the Queensland parliament, four Land Bills were passed, defining the conditions under which pastoral and agricultural land could be held¹⁵. The first sections of the public service to be set up were land titles offices, a survey office, and a police force. Thus the taking up of land had been expedited. Law and order now could be enforced. Communities were becoming affluent and stable.

In the first four years the Queensland population had more than doubled⁶. By 1864 there were 37,710 Queenslanders who had come from Great Britain and 9,592 had been born in the colony, 7,205 had come from other Australian states and New Zealand and 6,360 were foreigners⁶. Foreigners included 4,395 German immigrants, some of whom had set up a mission to the Aborigines at Zion Hill, Nundah, in 1838 and stayed on as settlers after the failure of the mission. From 1861 on there was a regular flow of migrants from Germany and other parts of war-torn and depressed Europe¹⁶. Trade and commerce, skilled artificers, providers of food, drink and accommodation, and hired servants accounted for almost 25% of the workers between the ages of 15 and 60. Approximately 25% were women engaged in unpaid domestic duties, and there was a handful, 3%, of public servants, legal, clerical and medical men and teachers. More than 25% of



A view from Wickham Terrace looking southwest, in the year of separation from New South Wales—1859 (photograph from *Queensland 1900*, Alcazar Press, Brisbane).

the 40,000 people of working age were engaged in agricultural or pastoral activities, reflecting the popular belief in land as the way to fortune.

At the same time, the Aborigines, whose tribes had occupied this land for more than 40,000 years, were dispossessed. Timbergetters, graziers and farmers excluded them from traditional hunting grounds, and tribal boundaries and the fabric of the ancient ways of life were breaking down. In May 1860 Governor Bowen reported on the distribution of clothes and blankets to Aborigines. The occasion was the Queen's birthday and 'about 500 Blacks of different clans and speaking different dialects had assembled'¹⁷ from their camps around Brisbane, including the present day suburbs of Toowong, Enoggera, Alderley and Clayfield¹⁸. By 1870 many of the Aboriginal traditional ceremonies had died out and many of the people had succumbed to European diseases — such as smallpox, measles and venereal disease — to which they had no natural immunity.

In their single-minded pursuit of the development of the economic welfare of their colony, and of their own fortunes, the settlers were excluding the ancient people who had occupied the land before them. As newcomers they were ignorant and careless of the evidence of Aboriginal cultures and were alienating large parts of the natural environment. The level of education in the Queensland of the early 1860s was, by present standards, low and the people, mostly, seemed not to recognise their impact on both the indigenous people and the natural environment of the land they had occupied.

At separation in 1859 there were two national schools, one at Drayton and one at Warwick. The Brisbane National School opened at the end of the year. In addition to these government operated schools there were six run by the Church of England, four by the Roman Catholic Church, and over 30 private schools, some with church affiliations, in the colony¹⁹. The 1864 census listed 17,893 students, but of these 13,814 were receiving tuition at home and only 5,079 were attending school. Nevertheless, the 1864 census statistics on literacy indicate that only 38,409 of the 61,467 people in Queensland could read and write. It was not until 1870 that fees at state schools were abolished, leading to a considerable increase in school attendance. Secondary education did not come to Queensland until



the Ipswich Grammar School was established in 1863. It was followed by Brisbane Grammar School in 1869²⁰.

Fortunately, there were some who were not insensitive to their adopted land and its native people, both of which were being changed so radically and abruptly. At this time, there was wide European interest in Australia and all things Australian. The early collecting efforts by Sir Joseph Banks in northern Queensland had created an avid interest in its plants, animals and inhabitants. This interest was reflected in the enthusiasm of the great museums of Europe for acquiring collections of material from Australia; and it filtered through to those who lived in the new colony, some of whom, no doubt, felt pride in their remarkable environment that was the subject of so much international attention. The settlers could not fail to be impressed that scientists invariably accompanied expeditions of exploration—for instance, the North Australian Expedition led by A.C. Gregory, setting out from Brisbane in August 1855, included a geologist, a botanist, a naturalist and a collector²¹. Charles Coxen, the founder of the Queensland Museum, was certainly influenced by the visit of his brother-in-law, the famous naturalist, John Gould, who came on a collecting trip to New South Wales in 1839²². Governor Bowen, a scholarly man who had been president of the University of Corfu, and who was an enthusiastic supporter of exploration and scientific study, wrote to Newcastle expressing the hope 'hereafter to be the promoter of exploring expeditions which, while developing the almost unlimited resources of Queensland, will add new conquests to Civilization and to Science.....'²³. Many of the early settlers, such as those who had arrived as migrants under the auspices of Dr Lang, had received a broad, general education in Great Britain. They may have known something of natural history studies and understood the excitement

Looking south along Queen Street from Edward Street, Brisbane, in 1860. The Parliamentary building—originally the Barracks building—that became the second home for the museum is at the top of the street on the right (photograph from *Queensland 1900*, Alcazar Press, Brisbane).



associated with Charles Darwin's theory expressed in the *Origin of Species* published in November 1859.

Thus, in this Queensland community — otherwise so intent on property and profit — there existed a nucleus of settlers who were aware of their unique inheritance and, in an otherwise raw colony, sought intellectual stimulation and a cultural focus. When Charles Coxen and others formed the Queensland Philosophical Society²⁴ in March 1859, these people were brought together. They shared strong interests in the science and technology of the day, and considerable curiosity about Australia and a desire to understand it and its Aboriginal people. The government gave temporary use of rooms in the Windmill on Wickham Terrace and a grant of £100 in 'furtherance of the aims of the society' and, toward the end of January 1862, the Philosophical Society began to display its collections²⁵. The press of the day reported on the event, the *Moreton Bay Courier* stating:

A large room has been set aside in the Windmill to receive contributions of specimens of natural history for classification and arrangement. It is to be hoped this will provide the nucleus of a Queensland Museum. This followed action by the Philosophical Society²⁶.

So, the Queensland Museum was founded on 20 January 1862, two years after the colony had been proclaimed²⁷. It was operated by the Philosophical Society with some assistance from the government until, from 1871, the government assumed the primary responsibility for it²⁸. The windmill overlooked a Brisbane that was a scattered assembly of buildings set along dirt streets and dominated by churches and a few structures of more than one storey²⁹; and —

looking towards the western suburbs,.....little could be seen but forest trees, with an occasional patch of cleared ground, cultivated for the production of maize, potatoes, pumpkins and lucerne, while the banks of the small creeks which entered the river on the Milton Reach held tangled vine scrub³⁰.

In December 1862, with 29 members, the society elected its first office bearers — the governor, Sir George Bowen, president; Coxen, vice-president; and a council of five that included H. Rawnsley and S. Diggles²⁴ — and its first report was read, in which were stated its intentions in regard to the museum:

to procure a site for a permanent Museum in such a location as shall be accessible to those who desire to consult the specimens and preparations it may contain, and also to render the collections as complete and valuable as the means at the disposal of the Society will admit of²⁵.

Many citizens, beginning to appreciate their unique environment, donated items to the society, and in due course the museum became a scientific and cultural focus for residents and visitors to the colony. In fact, until the university was founded in 1910, it was the only scientific institution in Queensland.

In New South Wales the Sydney Colonial Museum had been established in 1829 with the appointment of a carpenter, W. Holmes, as custodian — the same man who in 1831 was accidentally shot and killed while collecting at Moreton Bay³¹⁻². Five years after its foundation, its name 'Colonial Museum' was changed to the 'Australian Museum'. This name, which the New South Wales state museum — the largest and oldest of all the state museums — retains to this day, reflects the history of the



Ceramic medal celebrating the proclamation of Queensland. The medal is in the museum's collection.

settlement of Australia³¹. It seems likely that the men responsible for the establishment of the Queensland Museum had some of their guidance from the museums of Europe, especially from the British Museum. However, despite the six to eight days sailing time between Sydney and Brisbane, there were ties and communication with the museum in Sydney. Although Charles Coxen had sent collections of birds back to the London Zoological Society and the British Museum, he also sent material to the Australian Museum³¹; and while in Sydney in 1839 John and Elizabeth Gould had stayed with Dr George Bennett — the honorary secretary of the Australian Museum — before their four months long visit to Elizabeth Gould's brothers, Charles and Stephen Coxen, on their property near Scone, NSW³³. From 1861 under the effective direction of Gerard Krefft, and accommodated in its handsome building, the Australian Museum did, indeed, provide a model for the Queensland colonists to emulate³¹. After he had visited it in 1871, when the fledgling Queensland Museum occupied two small rooms in the Parliamentary building, Silvester Diggles 'longed



'Pastoral tenant of the Crown' — building a new homestead (from a hand-coloured photograph by Richard Daintree in the museum's collection).

for the time when we should have a similar library and a similar museum established amongst us in Brisbane'³⁴.

The realisation of the Philosophical Society's aspirations for its museum was not immediate. There were more pressing priorities that reflected the needs of the majority of the voters. Although the general impression was one of prosperity and rapid progress, not everything was satisfactory. Many of the migrants attracted to Queensland by Henry Jordan's activities in England were less than content, as an anonymous composition shows:

Now Jordan's land of promise is the burden of my song.
Perhaps you've heard him lecture, and blow about it strong;
To hear him talk you'd think it was a heaven upon earth.
But listen and I'll tell you now the plain unvarnished truth.

Here snakes and all vile reptiles crawl around you as you walk,
But these you never hear bout in Mr Jordan's talk;
Mosquitoes, too, and sandflies, they will tease you all the night,
And until you get colonized you'll be a pretty sight.

To sum it up in a few short words, the place is only fit
For those who were sent out here, for from this they cannot flit.
But any other men who come a living here to try
Will vegetate a little while and then lie down and die³⁵.

Accommodation was one of the main problems. In 1864, there were reported to be 2473 dwellings in Brisbane, of which 383 were brick, 1923 were of sawn timber, 150 were slab and 15 were aboard vessels⁶. The *Courier* referred to 'the want of decent house accommodation at a reasonable rent.....' and 'paltry humpies which are neither air-tight nor water-tight in flooring, walls or roofs.....'³⁶. Parts of Elizabeth and Queen Streets were described as 'an open cesspool'³⁷. The further one moved from Brisbane, the rougher the dwellings became and the quality of other amenities deteriorated. The lack of public sanitation was to lead to a rapid deterioration in health. Already in 1857 typhoid fever was occurring in Brisbane³⁸. Conditions deteriorated during the following two decades to the extent that in 1878 Brisbane suburbs were recording an infant mortality rate of 47%. Typhoid was not controlled until the epidemic of 1884 led to the *Public Health Act 1884* which resulted in gradual improvements³⁹.

It is not surprising that the government took no strong interest in developing the museum until, during the mineral booms of the late 1860s, it was persuaded that displays of minerals could help prospectors in their identification of further profitable discoveries.

It was a slow development, from that beginning on 20 January 1862, to this Queensland Museum of 1986. As we trace its history in the pages that follow, the museum of today, from its new home on the south bank of the Brisbane River, pays its tribute to the relatively small band of men and women who are part of that story. They are the staff members of the museum, and supporters and friends in public life and from amongst the general public. They worked, often in political and social environments that understood neither the need for, nor the role of a museum; and they worked through years of economic depression, poorly paid and in understaffed and inadequate buildings with few facilities and little equipment. Nevertheless, from the beginning, they made a contribution to knowledge and to the quality of life in this state. It is not a new museum that you see today, but one that has come of age, that was conceived by the Philosophical Society in the Brisbane of 1862.



Midday Camp (from a hand-coloured photograph by Richard Daintree in the museum's collection).